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Kneeling before the Fathers' Wand: Violence, Eroticism and Paternalism in Thomas Pynchon's *V.* and J.M. Coetzee's *Dusklands*

Derek Maus

Summary

In their fictional critiques of colonialism/imperialism, both Thomas Pynchon and J.M. Coetzee emphasize the ways in which the colonial powers misrepresent their intent through the conscious misuse of metaphorical language, especially that surrounding the paternal relationship. Pynchon's *V.* (1966) and Coetzee's *Dusklands* (1974) address the issue by presenting a number of settings in which such a distortion of language occurs. These disparate sections within the works span more than two hundred years of history, illustrating the longevity of such an approach on the part of European colonizers as well as the growing violence associated with this strategy.

This article examines the manner in which Pynchon and Coetzee deal with the subject of colonialism, primarily using Georges Bataille's *Erotism: Death and Sensuality* (1986) and Keith Booker's *Literature and Domination* (1993) to derive a critical formula concerning the linkage between the desire for domination, violence and the metaphor surrounding various forms of love. This formula is then used as the filter through which the two aforementioned novels are read, isolating instances in both authors' writing that demonstrate the specific ways in which colonial powers intentionally blur, or thoroughly obscure, the line between fatherly and sexual love to justify their efforts at political and cultural supremacy.

Opsomming

Sowel Thomas Pynchon as J.M. Coetzee beklemtoon in hulle fiksionele kritieke die wyse waarop die koloniale magte hulle bedoelings wanvoorstel deur doelbewuste misbruik van metaforiese taal; spesifiek die taal wat gebruik word in die konteks van die vaderlike verhouding. Pynchon se *V.* (1966) en Coetzee se *Dusklands* (1974) spreek hierdie punt aan deur 'n aantal agtergronde te skets waarteen hierdie verdraaiing van taal plaasvind. Hierdie uiteenlopende afdelings binne dié twee werke omvat meer as twee honderd jaar se geskiedenis, wat die langlewendheid van hierdie benadering van die Europese koloniseerders en die groeiende geweld wat met hierdie strategie geassosieer word, illustreer.

Hierdie artikel ondersoek die wyse waarop Pynchon en Coetzee die onderwerp kolonialisme behandel, deur hoofsaaklik na Georges Bataille se *Erotism: Death and Sensuality* (1956) en Keith Booker se *Literature and Domination* (1993) te verwys om 'n kritiese formule aangaande die skakeling of verband tussen die strewe na oorheersing, geweld, en die metafoor rondom die verskillende vorms van liefde af te lei. Hierdie formule word dan aangewend as 'n filter waardeur die twee genoemde werke gelees word deur voorbeelde uit te lig wat aantoon op watter wyse die koloniale magte opsetlik die skeidslyn tussen vaderlike en seksuele liefde laat vervaag, of verbloem, om hulle pogings om politieke en kulturele heerskappy te handhaaf, te regverdig.

Often recognized for artistic and stylistic ingenuity, the writings of Thomas Pynchon and J.M. Coetzee also contain a strong element of cultural criticism. Although the specific application is somewhat dissimilar, both writers employ postmodernist fictional techniques which blend (to varying degrees) satirical discourse with metafiction/metahistory to tell stories of the past with allegorical significance to the present. Pynchon's *V.* (1966) and Coetzee's *Dusklands* (1974) each uses episodes from various eras of the history of European imperialism[1] as backdrops for their narratives. These two works span more than two hundred years, beginning as far back as 1760 in South Africa and moving through the 1898 Fashoda affair in Egypt, a pair of clashes (1904 and 1922) between German troops and natives in German South-West Africa, until finally arriving at the Vietnam Conflict, an event cosynchronous with the publication of *Dusklands*.

As time's arrow moves forward through these two works (in an extremely fragmented fashion, given the lack of chronological linearity in both), a pattern of cyclically recurring and ever-increasing violence emerges. This is a result of the multifaceted approach which the writers take towards the concept of history. Coetzee and Pynchon both write in dialogue with Henry Adams's notion concerning the acceleration of history in the ways they depict the increasing lethality of violence.[2] They also write with the understanding that histories are consciously created texts and that such texts are necessarily edited and biased according to a dichotomous have/have-not power relationship. This relationship is portrayed by both Pynchon and Coetzee as a paternalistic one (in a literal, as well as the more familiar figurative, manner) specifically using and confusing the metaphor surrounding fathers and offspring to demonstrate the manner in which European imperialism absurdly misrepresents its violent actions as the necessary result of a benign fatherly love.

Importantly, the colonizers' misappropriation of the metaphor of fatherly love occurs through the inclusion of a sexual dimension into this relationship. Whether in the form of the literal rape of the native women - as recounted by both the German soldiers in Pynchon's novel and by Jacobus Coetzee in *Dusk-*

lands - or in more figurative terms (e.g. Eugene Dawn's stabbing of his son, an inversion of the Oedipal story), the great problem with the paternalistic model of colonization is the inherent linkage between death-love and the desire to control and dominate sexuality. Using the theories outlined by M. Keith Booker in his *Literature and Domination: Sex, Knowledge and Power in Modern Fiction* (1993) and coupling them with Georges Bataille's notions concerning the relationship between erotic sensuality and death, it is possible to derive a critical equation that illustrates this innate defect. If colonialism is derived from desire for domination, and if desire for domination is at root a sexual urge, then colonialism is a sexual urge. Furthermore, if the sexual urge is closely associated with death and violence, then it follows that colonialism and the paternalistic attitude that accompanies it is also closely associated with death and violence. It is this logical framework that informs the works of both authors under consideration here and the elucidation of this supporting philosophical structure is called for in order to understand their critiques of colonialism.

My aim is to examine these two novels first by isolating the attitudes towards imperialism/colonialism with which the authors imbue their characters, with emphasis on the way these attitudes are couched in the language of a fatherly relationship. Then, taking two episodes from each novel, I propose to compare the depictions of paternalism/imperialism contained therein in terms of the authors' individual aims and through the critical lens of Booker-plus-Bataille mentioned above. The sections I have chosen are (in the order that they are treated):[3] Chapter 9 of *V.* ("Mondaugen's Story"), which is narrated in New York in 1954, is set in *Deutschsüdwestafrika* in 1922 and hearkens back significantly to the same setting in 1904; Chapter 3 of *V.*, ("In which Stencil, a quick-change artist, does eight impersonations") set in Egypt in 1898; "The Vietnam Project", the novella which opens *Dusklands*; and finally, "The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee" portion of *Dusklands*, set in 1760 and 1761-1762. Furthermore, in discussing these episodes I will compare the approaches taken by Pynchon as an American writer and Coetzee as a South African writer in terms of their fictional treatment of the violence committed by various European forces against the native population in South Africa (since both writers specifically address this topic, albeit on different historical occasions and for different reasons).

In an effort to identify the source of the violence that they describe, both Pynchon and Coetzee specifically address the philosophy behind imperialism and the attitude which colonizers bring to the relationship that they establish with the colonized. Each writer deals with this relationship in terms of paternalism and acceptance of authority, although the ways in which these characteristics manifest themselves take on different forms. The incongruities between two

distinct sets of opposites - paternal love and violence/death towards one's own offspring; domination and benevolence - make the entire colonial paradigm inherently absurd for both Pynchon and Coetzee, and these incongruities become central themes within a pair of otherwise decentralized novels.

Keith Booker begins his chapter on *V.* in *Literature of Domination* with a clear statement concerning the nature of Pynchon's intent in writing about African colonialism: "... what is distinctive about Pynchon's treatment of European imperialist practices in Africa is his highly explicit indication of the sexual motivation behind such practices, a motivation at which Conrad only hints" (1993: 92). Earlier, Booker has noted that Pynchon's "depiction of the brutal treatment of African natives by their European colonizers ... pays special attention to relations between the genders and to the ideological complicity between patriarchy and imperialism" (1993: 92). This prefatory series of associations supports the central theme of Booker's discussion of the novel:

> [I]f it is possible to read *V.* as a suggestion that fascism was an inevitable symptom of a more fundamental disease of the human spirit, it is also just as possible to read it the other way around, as a suggestion that the degraded conditions of modern life are in fact the results of which totalitarian systems like fascism are the cause ... [t]he next obvious question would be, what caused fascism? *V.* is very much an attempt to answer that question ....
>
> This cause, *V.* suggests, is a drive for mastery and domination and the implication is that we will always have oppressive political systems until we can learn to eschew such mastery, treating the Other ... as a fellow subject rather than as an object for potential domination.
>
> (Booker 1993: 92)

A further implication of this thesis is that the philosophy and rhetoric of paternalism that undergirds this "drive for mastery and domination" bears a great deal of the responsibility for perpetuating and extending the reach of this "fundamental disease of the human spirit".

Booker's claims also echo a number of assertions concerning the link between erotic love and death made by the French critic and novelist Georges Bataille. The first sentence in Bataille's introduction to *Erotism: Death and Sensuality* defines the connection that the remainder of his book explores: "Eroticism, it may be said, is assenting to life up to the point of death" (Bataille 1986: 11). He later posits that "the domain of eroticism is the domain of violence, of violation" (p. 16) and that the relationship between lovers is one that necessarily is in constant and multivoiced dialogue with death:

> If the union of two lovers comes about through love, it involves the idea of death,

> murder or suicide. This aura of death is what denotes passion. On a lower level than this violence - a violence matched by the separate individual's sense of continuous violation - the world of habit and shared egotism begins, another mode of discontinuity, in fact. Only in the violation, through death if need be, of the individual's solitariness can there appear that image of the beloved which in the lover's eyes invests all being with significance.
>
> (Bataille 1986: 21)

Bataille concludes that "[e]roticism opens the way to death [and] death opens the way to the denial of our individual lives" (p. 24), an association that links love to some degree with dehumanization and inanimacy, although Bataille's argument does not necessarily make this linkage a destructive or negative one.

For Bataille, the "conscious refusal to limit ourselves within individual personalities" (p. 24) that is eroticism involves the *willingness* to negate the self through union in a larger whole of lover and beloved together:

> If the lover cannot possess the beloved he will sometimes think of killing her; often he would rather kill her than lose her. Or else he may wish to die himself. Behind these frenzied notions is the glimpse of a continuity possible through the beloved .... And in any case, beyond the image it projects, that precarious fusion, allowing as it does for the survival of the individual, may in fact come to pass.
>
> (Bataille 1986: 20)

Bataille thus puts forth the seeming paradox (reconciled by the fact that the negation of self that is called for is *only* psychological, and largely symbolic at that) that only through the surrender of the "isolation [of] ... individual separateness" (p. 20) can a person's life continue, either vicariously through the simple biological reproduction of the species or through the alleviation of suffering caused by the nonunion with the beloved. The corruption of this philosophy occurs when death itself becomes the beloved, a process that begins when the relationship between lover and beloved is not one of mutual possession ("treating the Other ... as a fellow subject"), but the domination of the latter by the former.

Love of inanimacy - with inanimacy taking either the form of mechanization or death (which are inexorably interwoven for Pynchon) - is one of the central themes of *V.*, as Theodore Kharpertian points out: "Pynchon's Menippean satire, *V.*, attacks the sterile ..., [which] occurs in the text in the 'inanimate'" (Kharpertian 1990: 58-59). Coetzee's characters in *Dusklands* spend a great deal of time ruminating on the relationship between self and other in terms of death and life. The concepts of devoting one's life to death (*un*life) or affirming one's life through death are inherent absurdities that both writers address.

Pynchon and Coetzee both challenge the problematic notion that repressive violence and death can be a by-product of love, either parental, religious or erotic. Furthermore, the mixing of the metaphor surrounding these three forms of love is one of the foremost "perversions" of human relationships, as demonstrated by the harmful effects in which such mixtures inevitably result. The authorial criticism inherent in these narratives condemns the intentional misuse of words associated with a particular form of love, whether in the form of Jacobus Coetzee's appropriation of the language of αγαπε ("Agape" defined as "unselfish loyal and benevolent concern for the good of another: ... the fatherly concern of God for man") to justify his murderous actions, Eugene Dawn's stabbing of his son to "protect" him from the boy's mother, or the policy of "Väterliche Züchtigung" practised by Von Trotha's men, which involved mass rape and other aspects of the "erotic nature of the domination imposed on the Africans by the Europeans in *V.*" (Booker 1993: 93). In fact, Dawn's whole "Vietnam Project" is an example of such conscious misuse of the language of paternal love, one which is intended to deflect criticism of the destructively violent policy of subjugation that his product has endorsed.

Pynchon most clearly states his views on the violence inherent in colonialism in the "Mondaugen's Story" chapter of *V.*. In this episode the reader meets Kurt Mondaugen, a young German engineer sent to southern Africa in 1922 to study atmospheric disturbances. He becomes involved with a group of German settlers and is ultimately stranded at the ranch of Herr Foppl in the midst of a "siege party" reminiscent of Poe's "Masque of the Red Death".[4] After largely withdrawing himself from the macabre proceedings of the "party" (which includes activities such as watching skirmishes between German troops and bands of natives as well as innumerable sexual liaisons of all varieties), Mondaugen takes ill and is projected into the past through a fever-induced reverie. His assumed persona in these dreams is that of an unnamed German soldier participating in the mass incarceration and extermination of the native Herero population in 1904-1907. As he walks among a mass of natives imprisoned on an island just off the Atlantic shore of the mainland, this soldier expresses the guiding sentiment of the bloodily repressive campaign being undertaken:

> The barren islets off Lüditzerbucht were natural concentration camps. Walking among huddled forms in the evening, distributing blankets, food and occasional kisses from the sjambok, you felt like the father colonial policy wanted you to be when it spoke of Väterliche Züchtigung; fatherly chastisement, an inalienable right.
>
> (Pynchon 1966: 267)

This is only one of a number of instances in which the sjambok, weapon of

choice for South African colonizers for centuries, is linked with sadomasochistic imagery. Not only does the sjambok "kiss" in this reference, but Fleische, one of Von Trotha's soldiers, uses this heavy whip to "ha[ve] the obligatory sport" (p. 263) with a rebellious prisoner's genitals. Also, as Booker points out, Pynchon portrays Foppl - who is both a soldier under Von Trotha in 1904 and an active participant in the violence of 1922 - as "a sadistic beast who derives a powerful erotic charge from the torture of the African natives ...". For example, as Foppl whips his servant Andreas, he attempts to project a sexual gratification onto his victim: "He doesn't want anything but the sjambok .... You like the sjambok, don't you, Andreas?" (Booker 1993: 93). Again, the terminology of different forms of love (erotic and fatherly) is mixed in the service of perpetuating a colonial relationship based on domination.

Additionally, the "fatherly chastisement" mentioned by the soldier claimed sixty thousand Herero lives in one year under Lothar von Trotha's command, which the narrator claims is "only 1 per cent of six million, but still pretty good" (Pynchon 1966: 245). Such a reference, along with the mention of "concentration camps" above links this entire episode with the Holocaust, and demonstrates the hundredfold multiplication of fatality between 1904 and 1945. Since both these instances of genocide can be attributed to a hypernationalist and essentially racist form of imperialism,[5] Pynchon can draw his ascending graph of violence through both these points. Information concerning the Holocaust is available to both the quasi-narrator Herbert Stencil (who is, in 1954, hearing the story from Mondaugen and then retelling it as it appears in Chapter 9) and Pynchon's readers. Thereby, Pynchon is able to make the temporal setting of the frame-story (1922 in southern Africa) a point of interpolation between the two time periods from which the section draws its narrative and symbolic weight. With the three "points" of 1904-1907, 1922 and 1936-1945 plotted on the graph of history, the reader can clearly see the heightening progression of violence through this chapter alone, an understanding which is further substantiated when the remainder of the novel is used to fill in other gaps in the time-line between 1898 and the present.

Molly Hite, writing about the comparison of Von Trotha and the Holocaust, warns against making too much of this pattern:

> The pattern of duplication is horrifying. But the narrative comment that calls attention to it also calls attention to the disparate human agents who are responsible for genocide. By suggesting that von Trotha was in competition with Hitler, the narrator implicitly denies that an irreversible force produced both of them. Historical episodes resemble each other, but this resemblance does not signal an underlying "plot".
>
> (Hite 1983: 65)

While Hite's assertions about the lack of an organized and unifying "plot" (i.e. organized conspiracy) are well worth noting, there is a logical philosophy, based on paternalism and the rights of the empowered in a paternalistic system to exert their will, which guides these "disparate human agents", whether they are repressing Jews, Vietnamese or African natives. This philosophy resembles Booker's "fundamental disease of the human spirit" both in terms of its progressive cause-and-effect acceleration and its "degrad[ation of the] conditions of modern life" (1993: 92).

The "character" of V., in all of her reputed variations (in Chapter 9 she is Vera Meroving, a woman associated with the growing fascist movements in both Germany and Italy), is not only Pynchon's indicator for the acceleration of violence through the century, but also a personification of the values of the philosophy mentioned in the preceding paragraph. As Theodore Kharpertian states, "V. serves both as the knavish object of satire and the symbolic vehicle of satire on European decadence and violence" (Kharpertian 1990: 71). She is present at each of the increasingly destructive episodes that occurs in the book as a figure possessing both a great allure and an uncanny knack for becoming embroiled in violent "Situations" (Pynchon 1966: 189), as Sidney Stencil would say. As the violence in the world of the novel increases, so does V.'s own inanimateness. By 1922 she already has an artificial eye and a gemstone sewn into her navel, a melding of the human with the nonhuman that will culminate in her literal deconstruction on Malta in 1943 in the form of the "Bad Priest" character. At that point V. is almost entirely composed of mechanical or inanimate parts, and "she" is disassembled by a group of Maltese children after being injured in a World War II bombing raid. Her presence at each of these scenes of chaos, coupled with her role (either active or passive) in instigating them, makes V. the problematic object of desire that drives the work along. V. loves death, therefore to love V., or to be obsessed with V., is by association, to love or be obsessed with death. She represents Bataille's "beloved" almost *in toto,* and when she becomes symbolically and physically affiliated with European forces of empire the associative circle that envelops both colonialism and death-love is closed.

Even in her first appearance (in 1898, as Victoria Wren, an eighteen-year-old English tourist in Egypt), she becomes embroiled in two violent scenes. First, on a personal level, she is mixed up with the murder of a British foreign service officer named Porpentine (a colleague of the older Stencil) while having an affair with one of his associates. Victoria and her social group are seen through the eyes of several narrators, each of whom gives the reader more insight into the relationship between what V. represents and the world around her. Yusef the factotum, a native Egyptian who is serving punch at a diplomatic party which

Victoria is attending, comments about himself: "What was he, Yusef, if not a public servant? Was he human? Before, he'd embraced political nihilism, certainly. But as a servant, here, tonight, for 'them'? He might as well be a fixture on the wall" (p. 68). In the portion narrated by Maxwell Rowley-Bugge, an itinerant British "ne'er-do-well" trying to scam some money out of Victoria's party, we learn that Victoria had a "renegade sundowner" uncle who regaled her with tales of his travels to Australia, thereby giving her "enough material to evolve between visits a private back of beyond, a colonial doll's world she could play with and within constantly: developing, exploring, manipulating". This material, coupled with the imperialistically-charged language she picks up through religious instruction at her convent school leads her to believe "that God wore a wideawake hat and fought skirmishes with an aboriginal Satan ... in the name and for the sake of any Victoria" (p. 73). The association of Victoria Wren (by name and behavior) with the royal Victoria, whose reputation involves both her zeal for colonial projects and her sexuality, only accentuates and heightens her status as a symbol of European imperialism.

Moreover, Victoria's consort *du jour,* Goodfellow, and a shady German diplomat named Lepsius share some perceptions of Alexandria and the lands beyond that demonstrate their attitude towards the region:

> Goodfellow sniffed at his wine. "Your traveling companion, ... we'd rather hoped to see him again."
>
> "Gone to Switzerland", said Lepsius, "of clean winds, clean mountains. One can have enough, one day of this soiled South".
>
> "Unless you go far enough south. I imagine far enough down the Nile one gets back to a kind of primitive spotlessness."
>
> ... Lepsius speculated: "Doesn't the law of the wild beast prevail down there? There are no property rights. There is fighting. The victor wins all. Glory, life, power and property; all."
>
> "Perhaps. But in Europe, you know, we are civilized. Fortunately jungle law is inadmissible."
>
> (Pynchon 1966: 75)

Goodfellow's final comment is ironic, given both the impending incivility of the war that looms on the horizon, the jealous murder of Porpentine which is about to take place, and the fact that the European colonial project is, simply put, a matter of "victor wins all", a clear statement of the desire to dominate. When examined as a whole, the chapter provides an introduction to the colonial philosophy using the terminology of "life, power and property" and begins to question who defines this terminology and how they use it to further their own goals.

On a broader level, a political crisis (as alluded to by Goodfellow and Lepsius above) is occurring regarding two expeditionary forces - one English, one French - which may meet at a place down the Nile called Fashoda (with possibly disastrous repercussions):

> M. Delcassé, Foreign Minister of a newly-formed French cabinet, would as soon go to war as not if there were any trouble when the two detachments met. As meet, everyone realized by now, they would. Russia would support France, while England had a temporary rapprochement with Germany - meaning Italy and Austria as well.
>
> (Pynchon: 1966: 67)

While on one level this chapter points out the serious flaws in the "balance of power" system of European diplomacy, it also links the colonial drive (which is the whole reason there are two European expeditions at Fashoda in the first place) with an eruption of violence on a hitherto unknown scale. Gebrail the phaeton-driver, one of the eight "narrators"[6] of this section, first observes aloud the potential for destruction contained in this event: "Far up the Bahr-el Abyad, in the heathen jungle, is a place called Fashoda. The Franks - Inglizi, Feransawi - will fight a great battle there, which will spread in all directions and engulf the world" (p. 85). History demonstrates that this was not the case at Fashoda, but such a situation did result from another confrontation in 1914, when the network of alliances and defense pacts that enveloped Europe was activated by the furore surrounding the assassination of Archduke Francis Ferdinand in Sarajevo.[7]

Victoria (and the world) move forward relatively unscathed from 1898. However, she does pick up a souvenir from the experience, a comb whose continuity marks her "true" identity throughout the remainder of the novel. This ivory comb, "whose shape was that of five crucified, all sharing at least one common arm", depicts "soldiers of the British Army", carved into the comb by a Mahdist artisan "in commemoration of the crucifixions of '83" (p. 167). Victoria wears this totem, ironically representative of an instance in which the colonizers were defeated (at least temporarily) throughout her later escapades. Dwight Eddins identifies the comb as the symbol of

> a sort of imperialist Passion, exactly in keeping with V.'s own gnosticizing religion and the vicious suppression of native populations that this "resurrected" imperialism will entail in twentieth century kingdoms of death.
>
> (Eddins 1990: 64)

It not only gives the reader (both the reader of Pynchon's novel and Herbert Stencil, the reader of the various sources that compose the V. story) a consistent

Stencil, the reader of the various sources that compose the V. story) a consistent clue with which to recognize V., but it also becomes a symbolic *memento mori* that serves her much as a religious relic would, focusing the power of her veneration of the inanimate unto herself.

Since the entire V.-quest portion of the novel is a re-creation of a father-created myth (Sidney Stencil has turned an obscure reference to a woman named "V." in his father's journal into his *raison d'etre*), the series of "Stencilized"[8] (Pynchon 1966: 228) stories in the novel arise from a similar metaphorical background as those of the German army's actions in 1904. While Stencil's mission is not one of death-dealing and subjugation like Von Trotha's, it is a mythology as spuriously grounded in reality as the idea that it is the duty of the Germans to chastise the Hereros with "kisses from the sjambok", rape or murder. Stencil changes the stories he discovers in order to prolong his quest, since it is the quest itself that gives meaning to his life. When he seems to have found evidence on Malta that will end his search for answers, he conveniently ignores it and goes on believing in the myth he has created despite active knowledge of its falsity. The metaphor serves Pynchon well as an illustration that a "myth is true - that is to say, *operationally* true - insofar as it has predictive force" (Coetzee 1974: 24). Both the myths that Stencil creates and that of "Väterliche Züchtigung" are true only because each myth-maker has the ability to exert force, either authorial or physical, to make them so. The three-part relation between myth, power and history is spelled out not only in the events of the individual chapters but in the overall framework of Stencil's own narrative.

Coetzee's many narrators in *Dusklands* (the various parts of the two novellas have at least three primary narrative voices, plus a whole chorus of secondary voices who affect the telling of the stories) also express the colonial mission in terms of paternalism, both directly and indirectly. Eugene Dawn, a United States Government mythographer working on a propaganda project during the Vietnam War, narrates the first of the two novellas. His job involves creating a more effective psychological warfare campaign for the American military to employ against the Vietnamese (ironically named the "New Life Project"; 1974: 1) in their attempts to subdue the native population. Claiming that "the highest propaganda is the propagation of a new mythology" he proposes a new "countermyth" (p. 25) to replace the framework that he sees guiding the American efforts at demoralization. The central figure of this countermyth is a father-figure, although one that must be adapted from its European context for use in the Vietnamese setting. Dawn first states that the "father is authority, infallibility and ubiquity" and that "[h]e does not persuade, he commands" (p. 21). Furthermore, although the "father-voice is not a new source in propaganda"

its application is ineffective in Vietnam because of the incongruence between actions that an "omnipotent Father" will take and those that "the prudent statesman dare not threaten" (p. 21). Essentially for Dawn, the failure of the past can be reduced to an unwillingness to recognize the real goal of American involvement in Vietnam – maintenance of imperialistic, if not necessarily imperial control.

Dawn's logical[9] solution to this problem is fairly simple: start being a real "Father" and stop being a "statesman". He writes:

> In limited warfare, defeat is not a military but a psychic concept. To the ideal of demoralization we pay lip service, and insofar as we wage terroristic war we strive to realize it. But in practice our most effective acts of demoralization are justified in military terms, as though the use of force for psychological ends were shameful ....
>
> There is an unsettling lack of realism about terrorism among the higher ranks of the military. Questions of conscience lie outside the purview of this study. We must work on the assumption that the military believe in their own explanations when they assign a solely military value to terror operations.
>
> (Coetzee 1974: 22)

He proposes not only full-scale adoption of psychological warfare as an expedient to ending the war, but outlines the methodology of this revision in terms of a father-myth that is applicable to the Vietnamese. He claims that the "no-surrender clause" associated with this father-myth must be understood before this new strategy can be effective: "Punishment for falling into the father's hands is to be eaten alive or penned eternally in a volcano .... Thus surrender is not an option because it means a fate worse than death" (pp. 25-26).

His discussion of the form of this new father-myth makes liberal reference to Greek archetypes (e.g. the Hydra and Athena) and applies a symbology of brothers, mothers, fathers and sons to the various players involved in the war. He concludes this lengthy and detailed analogy by delineating the departures which must be made in order to tailor it for the "Indo-China Theater":

> [w]e play out the drama of the end of the tellurian age and the marriage of the sky-god with his parthogene daughter-queen. If the play has been poor, it is because we have stumbled about the stage asleep, not knowing the meaning of our acts. Now I bring their meaning to light in that blinding moment of ascending meta-historical consciousness in which we begin to shape our own myths ....
>
> The father cannot be a benign father until his sons have knelt before his wand.

> The plotting of the sons against the father must cease. They must kneel with their hearts bathed in obedience.
>
> (Coetzee 1974: 26)

The heavily sexualized double-entendre of this passage (the phallic and sado-masochistic imagery of "kneeling before his wand" should resonate even to a non-Freudian) points out the ways in which Dawn participates in the sexualization of the paternalistic rhetoric; however, it also leads to his eventual psychological downfall by causing him to engage in a form of Oedipal drama (the Greek archetype of an inappropriately sexualized paternal relationship) within his own immediate family.

Thus, while Dawn's theories serve him well in elucidating a strategy on paper, they also eventually lead to his functional breakdown, both as an articulate formulator of military propaganda and as a person. His narrative disintegrates from a formally-structured theoretical proposal into a rambling recapitulation of his problematic personal life. His psychological stability eventually erodes to the point that his text becomes a highly detached, at times almost journalistic, narrative of his abduction and eventual stabbing of his son. He commits these acts partly out of a stated desire to protect the boy from what Dawn sees as the harmful influence of his mother: "I saved the child from a woman of unstable, hysterical character who was bringing him up as a ninny" (Coetzee 1974: 38). However, the incongruity of violent paternal love proves to be ineffectual in convincing young Martin of his father's benevolence, much to Eugene's puzzlement:

> Is there not some incandescent fervour of speech that will convince the child that however abrupt or tyrannical I seem, my motives are pure? How loud must I shout, how wide with passion must my eyes glare, how must my hands shake before he will believe that all is for the best, that I desire only that he should grow up to be what I am not, a happy man?"
>
> (Coetzee 1974: 38)

Dawn's story ends as he is recuperating in a mental institution and attempting to reacclimate himself to the "real" world after his professional and personal dissolution.

The sentiment expressed in the last two sentences of the previous quote could just as well be taken directly from the fictional "Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee" that follows Dawn's story. The narrator of this section (at least the first two parts of it), is a Boer who shares the author's initials[10] and engages in a pair of rapacious "explorations" of the South African interior in the land of a tribe called the Great Namaqua. His interaction with the native population is

conducted with an inherent condescension of such proportions that he is capable of reducing members of the Namaqua tribe, his own cohort of native retainers or the ubiquitous "Bushmen" (and, to some degree, even Dutch women, whom he describes as "first of all property themselves"; p. 61) to the status of pesky "animals" or personal belongings to be disposed of as he chooses.

The narrative opens with a brutally frank section in which Jacobus Coetzee details the white settlers' attitudes towards both the "domesticated" Hottentots and the Bushmen, who are described as "wild animal[s] with an animal's soul" (p. 58). Although Jacobus laments the fact that the lives of Hottentots and whites are becoming more similar,[11] he cites the "one gulf" between them as the fact that "[w]e are Christians, a folk with a destiny" (p. 57), thereby setting up the necessary distinction of moral superiority that defines the colonial relationship. He proceeds to describe the process of exterminating the Bushmen, maintaining his dehumanizing language throughout. For example: "It is only when you hunt them as you hunt jackals that you can really clear a stretch of country" (p. 58) or "[t]he only way of taming a Bushman is to catch him when he is young" (p. 60).

In describing his sexual preference for "Bushman girls", he clearly elucidates his atavistic perception of the natives in a series of statements that blend themes of sexual domination, colonialism and violence:

> [a] wild Bushman girl is tied to nothing, literally nothing. She may be alive, but she is as good as dead. She has seen you kill the men who represented power to her, she has seen them shot down like dogs. You have become Power itself now and she is nothing .... She is the ultimate love you have borne your own desires alienated in a foreign body and pegged out waiting for your pleasure.
> (Coetzee 1974: 61)

While this is not "paternal" (i.e., fatherly) control in terms of the power dynamic, it is certainly "paternalistic", in the sense that it is an all-encompassing control over the individual affairs of another. Coming after Dawn's lengthy monologue on myth and power-relations, though, the correspondences between Jacobus's assertions here and those set forth in "The Vietnam Project" place them within a similar ideological context - that of colonialist control along the "victor take all" model. Furthermore, the mingling of the term "ultimate love" with the acts of murder and rape echoes both Bataille as well as Pynchon's linkage in "Mondaugen's Story" of loving parental discipline with the slaughter of sixty thousand people.

During his first trip into the hinterland (ostensibly for the purpose of hunting elephants), Jacobus and his band of six "Hottentots" ("Five were my own, one I hired ..."; p. 61)[12] encounter the Namaqua after crossing the Great (Orange)

River. Jacobus has some admiration for them, but immediately asserts his superiority with a show of force:

> [A] wild Hottentot, the kind of Hottentot that met us that day, one who has lived all his life in a state of nature, has his Hottentot integrity .... It is a pretty thing to see, this confidence, for a change, for one who has moved so long among the cunning and the cowardly, though based on an illusion of course, a delusion of strength, of equivalence .... [T]here we stood before them, three muskets, mine loaded with swan-shot, the others' with ball; they secure in their delusion, we in our strength. So we could look at each other like men, for the last time. They had never seen a white man.
>
> (Coetzee 1974: 65)

The interaction between the groups is relatively peaceful at first and Jacobus gives a moderate gift of tobacco to the Namaquas gathered around. However, when the natives begin to climb aboard his party's wagons in search of more tobacco, Jacobus reacts by ordering his men to beat them away.

Once he has regrouped himself (and his possessions are out of reach), he tries to reassert his control of the situation through a "schoolmasterly" admonition to the Namaqua, which he says is met with "only gathering boredom and inattention" (p. 70). All of his self-conceptions in relation to the Namaqua involve some sort of position of authority or dominion, few of which are borne out by the situation. For example, he fancies himself resembling a deity to them: "on my horse and with the sun over my right shoulder I looked like a god, a god of the kind they did not yet have" (p. 71). This proves to be a delusion (although Jacobus does not admit it as such) when the reception he receives in the village is not to his satisfaction ("The Hottentots have no feeling for ceremony and show only the most perfunctory reverence for authority"; p. 72). As the Namaqua again begin to threaten his possessions, Jacobus and his men repel them with the threat of shooting and drive off into the night to flee the village, with a retinue of thirty Namaqua in pursuit. Jacobus soon becomes ill and is incapacitated to the point of being able only to "evacuate [him]self heroically over the tailgate" (p. 75) of his wagon, a comment which, thanks to its overblown rhetoric, accurately (although probably not intentionally, at least on Jacobus's part) links his self-conception with excrement.[13] The Namaqua catch up with his party and, with assistance from Jacobus's men, take him back to their village and place him in one of the quarantine huts set aside for the isolation of menstruating women. This places Jacobus in both a symbolic and a very real situation of powerlessness, a state he cannot abide for long, and rebels against almost as soon as he is able to.

Here his illness runs its course and the narrative becomes Jacobus's medi-

tations upon divergent themes, most important of which for this discussion is his monologue about the role of the gun in his life:

> The gun is our mediator with the world and therefore our saviour .... The gun saves us from the fear that all life is within us. It does so by laying at our feet all the evidence we need of a dying and therefore a living world .... I leave behind me a mountain of skin, bones, inedible gristle and excrement. All this is my dispersed pyramid to life. It is my life's work, my incessant proclamation of the otherness of life.
>
> (Coetzee 1974: 9)

The gun is the means of self-realization for Jacobus, providing the ability to dominate over the "otherness" outside one's own being. Given that superior firepower was one of the main (although certainly not the only) reasons that imperialism/colonialism succeeded to the degree that it did, the association between the gun's ability to create "a mountain of skin, bones, inedible gristle and excrement" and affirmation of life is a seemingly paradoxical juxtaposition that fits neatly into the skewed logical framework of those like Jacobus who saw the subjugation of native lands and peoples as a right, a duty and a mission. Jacobus comments that "the need for [the gun] is metaphysical rather than physical" (p. 80), and that "[t]he gun stands for the hope that there exists that which is other than oneself" (p. 79), thereby paraphrasing - and taking literally - Bataille's assertion that "violation, through death if need be, of the individual's solitariness" is the only thing that "invests all being with significance" (Bataille 1986: 21). Jacobus's logic, based on the flawed (in the eyes of the author) premise that one can use an "extension of the self ..., a flame-throwing device for example" to "turn ... death into a hymn of life" (Coetzee 1974: 79), is of the same sort that allows Fleische to convince himself that his manservant Andreas enjoys being beaten by the sjambok in *V.*.

Jacobus recovers himself enough to be able to travel and orders his men to pack up and make ready to go, a situation made inevitable when he is banished after biting off the ear of a Namaqua child during a melee resulting from some ill-timed horseplay. Only the "good watchdog" (p. 73)[14] Klawer, obeys his command. The other four of his men choose instead to stay with the Namaqua and defiantly inform Jacobus of this intent with taunts and physical insults. Jacobus makes his way back to the white settlements near the coast after a long and surreal journey that plunges the narrative into a dreamlike tone that echoes both Dawn's descent into questionably temporary insanity and Mondaugen's reverie.

Klawer dies during the return voyage and Jacobus is obliged to finish the journey alone, conceiving it to be both a challenge and a diversion: "I had been

set a task, to find my way home, no mean task, yet one which I, always looking on the brighter side of things, preferred to regard as a game or contest" (p. 98). Moreover, he ponders the possibility of four different "games" within this scenario, one of which is "an entirely different contest between myself and the circumjacent universe in which I might be required to call up an expeditionary force and return in triumph to punish my depredators and recover my property" (p. 98).

This is exactly the course of action he undertakes once he has returned, as is chronicled in the "Second Journey to the Land of the Great Namaqua". Jacobus and a party of mercenaries (led by one Captain Hendrik Hop) "descended on their [the Namaqua] camp at dawn" and immediately announce their intentions by shooting a young girl dead. Jacobus vows "I will not fail you, beautiful death" and moves down into the village to round up his men and his guns, both of which are treated equally as his rightful property. At this point Jacobus takes on the roles of punishing father and sacrificial priest (another father) of God (*the* Father) as he condemns his former servants with a silver-tongued malediction:

> We do not require of God that he be good, I told them, all we ask is that he never forget us. Those of us who may momentarily doubt that we are included in the great system of dividends and penalties may take comfort in Our Lord's observation on the fall of the sparrow: the sparrow is cheap but not forgotten. As explorer of the wilderness I have always thought myself an evangelist and endeavoured to bring to the heathen the gospel of the sparrow, which falls but falls with design .... Have faith, be comforted, like the sparrow, you are not forgotten.
>
> (Coetzee 1974: 101)

He then decrees their death (oddly linking his ostensibly Christian act with that of Pilate by leading them to "the Golgotha I had indicated" for their execution)[15] and orders his men to "wipe the village off the face of the earth" (p. 102). This command creates a strong link with Dawn's report by echoing the assertions that he had made eighty pages earlier (and two hundred years later) about the tactics of the American military: "[W]e have justified the elimination of enemy villages by calling them armed strongholds, when the true value of the operations lay in demonstrating to the absent VC menfolk just how vulnerable their homes and families were" (p. 22). The "true value" of this action for Jacobus is to demonstrate his power after the ignominious treatment he felt he received during his previous visit - i.e., to "punish his depredators" for depriving him of his rightful dominion over them. Jacobus, metaphorically invoking three "fathers", has returned to the village of the Great Namaqua to end the "plotting of the sons against the father" (p. 26), once and for all.

Also, the deaths of the four former servants all recall either the "operational sympathy" concept from *V.* (which postulates that the natives willingly participate in their own deaths) or the "no-surrender clause"[16] that Dawn mentions in his report. Furthermore, Rosemary Jane Jolly's assertions about the "sado-masochistic" nature of the violence depicted in *Dusklands*, strongly reminiscent of both Bataille and Booker, are brought into clear focus by Jacobus's actions in this episode. Jolly writes:

> Because aggression exercised to the point of virtual annihilation is the only form of intersubjective recognition in both sadism and masochism, the gun becomes a copula through which such recognition is achieved ....
>
> Jacobus receives self-gratification from the destruction of all that he determines to be the other.
>
> (Jolly 1996: 117)

After cradling the dying body of Plaatje (whose execution he has "so unkindly botched"; Coetzee 1974: 105) in his arms and comparing this cruelly drawn-out execution with his "squeamish[ness]" (p. 105) as a youth to break the necks of wounded birds, Jacobus gives an "expiation explanation palinode" about the episode that fits in neatly with Jolly's notions:

> What did the deaths of all these people achieve?
>
> Through their deaths I, who after they had expelled me had wandered the desert like a pallid symbol, again asserted my reality. No more than any other man do I enjoy killing; but I have taken it upon myself to be the one to pull the trigger, performing this sacrifice for myself and my countrymen, who exist, and committing upon the dark folk the murders we have all wished.
>
> (Coetzee 1974: 106)

This grudging acceptance of the role of punisher (almost a parody of the clichéd "this hurts me more than it hurts you" rhetoric of the physically-chastising parent) is once again linked with the religious justification that permeates Jacobus's narrative: "God's judgment is just, irreprehensible and incomprehensible. His mercy pays no heed to merit. I am a tool in the hands of history" (p. 106).

The "afterword" that is ostensibly added by the translator further blends satire and metahistory in that the narrator purports the task of his work in translating Jacobus's account to be "a work of piety towards an ancestor and one of the founders of our people, a work which offers the evidence of history to correct certain anti-heroic distortions that have been creeping into our conception of the great age of exploration ..." (p. 108). Jacobus is no hero, as the narrative clearly

shows if the story is freed from the influence of its teller. The incongruity between the reality of the story and the self-aggrandizing excuses offered by both the "translator" and Jacobus serves to counterpoint the human suffering and injustice against the inhuman abstraction that the paternalistic mythology of colonialism has engendered.

Dawn is somewhat pitiable in his status as a "tool in the hands of history". He is only a subordinate agent of the government/military that is carrying out his plans rather than a front-line perpetrator of such a policy (like Jacobus). Still, his actions are also reprehensible to Coetzee, the author, because he consciously recasts and distorts history, turning it towards the purpose of expanding the capabilities of the paternal colonizer to effect violent control over the Vietnamese. His involvement with this task dehumanizes him to the point that he is no longer able to function coherently when confronted by the police after he has essentially kidnapped and incarcerated his own son. The detachment evident in the narrative as he describes pushing the knife into his son's back (and receiving the subsequent blow on the head from the policeman) is reminiscent both of Stencil's "forcible displacement" of grammatical person and the coldly indifferent tone with which Jacobus describes hunting Bushmen. Ultimately, both Dawn and Jacobus must be held accountable for their actions outside the realm of the myths they have created to justify the kind of violence that they, either personally or by extension, have inflicted. Coetzee's presentation of their separate, yet related, stories erodes the validity of the philosophical framework behind the paternal and paternalistic myth systems that both Dawn and Jacobus have created.

By allegorical extension, this debunking of myth extends to the setting out of which *Dusklands* arises, namely that of South Africa in 1974. The policies of apartheid were well entrenched and the riots in Soweto were only two years away. The words and actions which Coetzee attributes to "an ancestor" in the mid-1700s are resonant with the situation that existed in his own time, in which the white minority in the country asserted its own myths about dominance and superiority through force of law and arms. "Glory, life, power, property; all" (Pynchon 1966: 75) were claimed by the whites based on their ability to exert their power over the black majority in an effort to make them submit "before the wand". The similarities between the narrative of Jacobus, the contemporary account of Vietnam and the situation in 1974 in South Africa make this a novel with a clear didactic and satiric purpose for Coetzee's most geographically and demographically immediate audience.

In exposing the effectiveness as well as the fallacy of the paternalistic mythography of colonialism, Pynchon and Coetzee are attempting to palliate the rising tide of violence that may yet be the legacy of the twentieth century.

Neither writer is particularly convinced of the possibility of this goal being achieved - neither *V.* nor *Dusklands* can be said to have much of a happy ending, or much of an "ending" at all, for that matter, at least in terms of a denouement. Both authors' later works show evidence of a continued pessimistic analysis of many of these same themes (Mondaugen and the Hereros even reappear in Pynchon's 1973 novel *Gravity's Rainbow*). However, the aim of neither the satirist nor the cultural critic is to soothe the worries of his/her audience. Both authors have presented readers with a number of examples from history that correspond to a recognizable pattern, based on the misappropriation of metaphor and the dangerous intermingling of violence, sexuality and political/cultural dominion. Pynchon and Coetzee have created works in which resemblances between the past and present are intended to suggest a possible future. This future is not necessarily irreversible, but, as presented by these authors, it is most definitely undesirable. As Hite states, in writing about Pynchon's authorial task, "[t]he important thing about resemblances is that they can be recognized; it is always possible, if highly unlikely ... that someone will learn" (Hite 1983: 65). Pynchon and Coetzee both make compelling arguments in favor of such learning, for humanity as a whole.

Notes

1. I am using "European" here as a cultural rather than geographical signifier, thereby including predominantly (if not homogeneously) European-derived nations like the United States and pre-1990s South Africa under this umbrella term. Furthermore, a distinction is made between the critical usage of the terms "imperialism(-ist)" and "colonialism(-ist)" along the following lines: "Imperialism" refers to the conscious program of European nations to bring other peoples under their *political* control. "Colonialism" refers to the attempt on the part of these nations to impose their *cultural* or *societal* norms upon the colonized area, whether this attempt involves eradication or assimilation of the indigenous population. In this sense, colonialism follows from imperialism, but the two ideologies are closely interrelated (albeit not synonymous). Not all of my sources use the terms in this way, but part of the reason for the definition above was the lack of consistency among critics in defining these terms.

2. Herbert Stencil's use of the third person to refer to himself is specifically styled after Adams's similar usage in the *Education* ... and Pynchon's affinity for Adams's theories about modern life has been accurately noted by Theodore Kharpertian (1990), William Plater (1978) and others.

3. I have taken the episodes from *V.* out of both chronological order and out of the order in which they appear in the novel because the later chapter specifically elucidates the guiding philosophy present in the earlier chapter. I find it useful to define the philosophy first, using Pynchon's own definitions, and then to re-examine the earlier chapter with this perspective in hand.

4. John Dugdale, among others, noted the similarities between Poe's story and the scene at Foppl's villa, in his *Thomas Pynchon: Allusive Parables of Power* (1990).

5. Hitler's "cleansing" of the German *Lebensraum* and Von Trotha's expansion of German colonial power flow from the same philosophical spring: both are based on the assumption that the group in power has the right to evict or exterminate any inferior groups which inhabit their rightful property. Since the father/child dynamic necessarily posits the father in a place of power, the deadly logic of this configuration makes genocide an almost inevitable result of its application in a colonial setting.

6. Stencil tells the story, but there are eight separate voices acting as narrators in the eight brief episodes that make up this chapter. These are the "impersonations" alluded to in the chapter title.

7. The assassination itself was of negligible political import throughout Europe. It was the declaration of war by Austria, based on Serbia's failure to meet demands for restitution, which caused the outbreak of the war by setting the domino-effect of the various treaties in motion. An even more geographically-distant event like the confrontation at Fashoda could just as easily have begun the war in 1898 (and there were other pre-1914 incidents in North Africa that did escalate tensions), making the link between colonialism and Gebrail's apocalyptic vision a valid one.

8. The veracity of the stories that Stencil relates is questionable because of the fact that he seems to revise the "facts" to make them fit into his theories concerning the V. conspiracy. As the narrator says, regarding Mondaugen's relation of his story to Stencil: "The tale proper and the questioning after took no more than thirty minutes. Yet the next Wednesday afternoon at Eigenvalue's office, the yarn had undergone considerable change: had become, as Eigenvalue, put it, Stencilized" (Pynchon 1966: 211).

9. Everything Dawn writes in the early part of his "Vietnam Report" is meticulously annotated and supported with quotes from his extensive research (as is the explanatory essay that follows the two separate recollections of Jacobus Coetzee's trips into the land of the Namaqua), giving a sterile and mechanical sort of reason to the violence contained within it. As this logic begins to break down

(along with the focus of the actual "Report") Dawn himself descends into an irrational paranoid episode that ends with him stabbing his own son.

10. The author J.M. Coetzee's nominal "doubles" in the text are numerous. Dawn's boss and editor on the New Life Project is named Coetzee, and Jacobus Coetzee's narrative is ostensibly translated by another J.M. Coetzee and edited by his father S.J. Coetzee.

11. He uses the example of a mulatto named Adam Wijnand who managed to achieve wealth and the fact that "[t]here are those of our people who live like the Hottentots, pulling up their tents when the pasture gives out and following the cattle after new grass" (Coetzee 1974: 57) as evidence of the leveling of the society. The rest of his narrative serves as a drastic counterpoint to this assertion.

12. Importantly, though, Jacobus ends up severely abusing and abandoning the hired native in the wilderness because he insists that he cannot exert the same sort of control over someone who "imagined he held a special position among my followers" (Coetzee 1974: 62). This points out the difference between a relationship based on some form of mutually-beneficial commerce and one based on political, cultural or physical domination.

13. All through this section, Jacobus refers to his bodily functions (both evacuating his bowels and lancing a carbuncle which has developed on his buttock) in exalted terms, either in this self-aggrandizing manner or in a vaguely erotic language.

14. This epithet concerning Klawer links back to Dawn's comment about himself as he is barricading himself into a motel room in an attempt to keep his wife and the police from taking his son away: "I am the faithful father at this post, the watchdog guarding the sleeping babe" (p. 39).

15. As previous examples show, Jacobus has very little problem utilizing mixed sets of metaphor in his self-conception, so this blending of roles should not come as much of a surprise.

16. The servant Adonis tries to appeal to Jacobus's mercy but gets only a bullet in the mouth for his attempts.

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